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Animal Crackers

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Animal Crackers

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Anti-Dog Legislation

Nationwide press and television coverage of biting incidents reminds us of the problems existing because of vicious dogs. There are many aspects of these problems. Unfortunately, many dog laws are not enforced, particularly those which require licensing and vaccination against rabies. Dog fighting continues in many areas and owning a fighting dog has become a fad. Unfavorable publicity about so-called "pit bulls" has resulted in an "identity crisis" for the four breeds in this category, American Staffordshire terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers and bull terriers, registered by the American Kennel Club, and the American pit bull terrier registered by the United Kennel Club.

The American Kennel Club, which is opposed to vicious dogs of any breed, suggests that the situation is an irresponsible people problem, not a dog problem. Responsible dog ownership must be encouraged. They are developing a canine citizenship program. Recognizing that dogs are not born trained nor are their owners born knowing how to train them, the program's premise is the belief that all dogs should be trained to be under control, a pleasure to their owners and a nuisance to nobody.

Be on the look-out for breed-specific dog laws. There can be no objection to laws against vicious or biting dogs. The American Kennel Club has a hotline number for reporting breed-specific or any other anti-dog legislation and to help concerned individuals and organizations work to prevent legislation which discriminates against a specific breed. The hotline number is 1-800-252-8355 (1-800-AKC-TELL). This number can be used only for information about legislation.

Notes on Drugs

Ivermectin, the drug used to prevent canine heartworm disease, is given once a month instead of daily. It prevents the development of adult *Dirofilaria immitis* by eliminating the tissue stage of heartworm larvae. The first dose must be given within a month after the first exposure to mosquitoes and the final dose within a month after the final exposure. The drug is not effective against adult worms in the heart and has some action against circulating microfilariae. All dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection before starting treatment with *Ivermectin*. Infected dogs should be treated to remove adult heartworms and microfilariae before *Ivermectin* is given.

Diethylcarbamazine (DEC) is the drug most often given in daily doses to prevent heartworm disease. This drug also is effective against roundworms (ascarids). When changing from daily to monthly preventive treatment, control of roundworms and hookworms will require other drugs.

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Ointments containing benzocaine should not be used on cats. A recent case report describes a case where respiratory distress and collapse appeared about 20 minutes after the owner used a cream containing benzocaine on a young cat with a history of itching skin disease for three weeks. It is recommended that extreme caution be used when treating cats with benzocaine, which is an ingredient of some over-the-counter preparations.

Drugs should not be used in pregnant females unless absolutely necessary. The most critical time in a bitch is the second and third week after mating. In the queen (cat), the critical period is the first two weeks after mating. Most drugs have the ability to cross the placental "barrier" and enter fetal circulation and tissues, causing adverse effects. Most antibiotics are "safe" except for the tetracyclines which may result in a permanent yellow staining of growing teeth. Some drugs are known to be contraindicated during pregnancy but there usually is a safe choice. The veterinarian should be consulted before any drug (including vaccines) is given to a pregnant animal.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is a term used to describe excessive frequency and fluidity of the feces. It is not a diagnosis in itself. There are many causes including functional disorders such as excitement, scavenging, changes in diet, over-feeding and unfamiliar water. It may be a sign of generalized disease or it may accompany intestinal parasitism and other diseases of the gastro-intestinal tract.

Home treatment should be limited to withholding food for 24 hours and giving a product such as PeptoBismol or Kaopectate every four hours. Ice cubes may be offered. On the second day, feed small amounts of bland food such as boiled rice, cottage cheese, cooked hamburger or baby food. Seek veterinary advice if the diarrhea persists for more than 24 hours, or if there is persistent vomiting, any sign of blood in the stool, elevated temperature or generalized signs of illness.

It is unwise to use antibiotics unless prescribed by the veterinarian and hesitate before using any of the many "home remedies" (except Kaopectate, PeptoBismol or similar products). These may do more harm than good.

If diarrhea is a continuing problem, the cause must be determined before it can be treated successfully. In many cases, medication is not the answer.

Lyme Disease

There have been frequent newspaper reports of Lyme Disease in people and in dogs. The cause, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is a spirochete carried by a tick, *Ixodes dammini*, frequently found on deer. The tick is very tiny, about half the size of the head of a pin. It may be found in brush and tall vegetation along trails and paths, in forests and in fields.

In humans, a characteristic rash develops after a variable incubation period of weeks or even months. This rash has not been observed in dogs which usually show signs of pain in the joints and lameness. Prompt treatment with antibiotics (penicillin and tetracycline) is curative. If the disease is not diagnosed and treated, permanent joint problems, neurological disorders or heart disease may result.

The disease was first identified in 1975 in children living near Lyme, Connecticut, and has since been found in 35 states. It is something to be concerned, but not alarmed, about. Physicians and veterinarians have been alerted, and possible exposure to ticks is considered in diagnosis.

A Bit of History

The University of Pennsylvania Kennel Club held its first (and last) Dog Show on Franklin Field in Philadelphia on Friday, June 2, 1911.

There were 13 judges, mostly from the Philadelphia area, but one came from Massachusetts and two from New York. There were 370 dogs representing 38 breeds in 660 classes (most dogs were entered in more than one class). Over 200 trophies were offered. The largest entry was 33 Bulldogs and there were 27 Pomeranians, 20 Rough Collies and 17 French Bulldogs. A Mexican Hairless was entered in Miscellaneous. Its name was "Sport" and its date of birth, breeder and pedigree were unknown. This was an American Kennel Club licensed show and most entries had a registration number, date of birth, name of breeder and owner and pedigree (sire and dam).

A number of entries were listed for sale. The prices for Russian Wolfhounds ranged from \$125.00 to \$2,000.00. A Pekingese Spaniel was priced at \$1,000.00, a Dachshunde for \$300.00, a Boston Terrier for \$125.00 and an Italian Greyhound for \$50.00. One Bulldog was \$100.00 while another was \$1,000.00.

Russian Wolfhounds are now registered as Borzois — this change of name was made in 1936. I can find no explanation for Pekingese *Spaniels*. Pekingese were first registered in 1906 and the show catalogue lists prizes offered by the Pekingese Club of America. Probably some old terminology added "Spaniel" to the breed.

One of the show veterinarians was William Jacoby Lentz, a 1904 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine. He served on the Faculty from 1907 until his retirement in 1948, and devoted most of his career to the small animal clinic. His patients included many well-known show dogs.

Very little information about the Kennel Club is available and the show catalogue is about the only record of its existence. We would be happy to hear from any reader who might know about it.

Poison Hotlines

The National Animal Poison Information Network (NAPINet) provides daily, round-the-clock information on poisons. The headquarters are at the University of Illinois and a second regional center has been established at the University of Georgia. It has been proposed that eventually there will be 10 or 12 regional animal poison information centers.

Rodenticides account for the highest percentage of calls, followed by insecticides, toxic plants, human medications and household products. There have been calls about dogs being affected by lawn herbicides. All information is entered into a central, computerized data base, which currently has information on 4,000 naturally occurring and manmade agents.

Calls should be made by veterinarians, if possible, but they are accepted from animal owners.

Illinois Animal Poison Information Center
(217) 333-3611

Georgia Regional Center
(404) 542-6751